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TOC H

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WAR SERVICE



NEWS SHEET

SPECIAL

S.E.A.C. NUMBER.

ALAN COWLING, M.B.E., Toc H Commissioner in South East Asia Command, is in this country for the first time in five years for a brief leave. He brought with him the following letter from General Leese, commending the work of Toc H in that theatre of war.

Lieut.-General Sir Oliver Leese, Bt., K.C.B., D.S.O.,
Office of the Commander-in-Chief, TAC HQ.,
Allied Land Forces, South East Asia,

Alan Cowling, Commissioner Toc H,
To 22, Lansdowne Road, Calcutta.

Dated 16th March, 1945.

Dear Mr. Cowling,

"I am very glad to know that you are going home to get more help for the work of Toc H in this theatre. I hope you will be very successful.

"The work which the Philanthropic Bodies are doing here is beyond praise, its scope is almost unlimited, and it is only the shortage of personnel which at present prevents an extension which we all greatly desire.

"From the first, Toc H has been distinguished by the pioneering enterprise of its war organisation in India and in Burma. Its most valuable work is the provision of mobile teams with troops in the field. These teams, which form a centre round which all amenities in the most forward areas are grouped, are doing splendid work in Burma now. We need as many more of them as you can provide.

"Hostels and Clubs are other branches of your work which are invaluable to us here. We have asked you to undertake a big programme of development in these directions. Here again, you can only help us if suitable men and women will come forward to do this valuable work for our soldiers.

"Philanthropic Bodies make a contribution to the welfare of troops in the field which could not be provided in any other way. By personal contact you bring to our men the spirit of your organisation and a message from their people at Home.

"I hope that while you are at home you will make widely known the value we place on the work of Toc H. As a result I trust you will find many men and women who want to play their part with Toc H in the great service it is rendering to our troops in this theatre."

Yours very sincerely,

(signed) OLIVER LEESE

Commander, Allied Land Forces, South East Asia.

Toc H has 17 Static Clubs and Hostels, 8 Mobile Centres, 3 Malaria Forward Treatment Units, 4 Indian Troops' Clubs and 1 Centre for West African Troops in India and Burma. The photographs overleaf show some of them.



Talbot House, Vizagapatam.



Kotagiri, S. India.



West African in Burma.



Constructing Basha Hut.



Toc H Warden, Indian Troops' Centre.



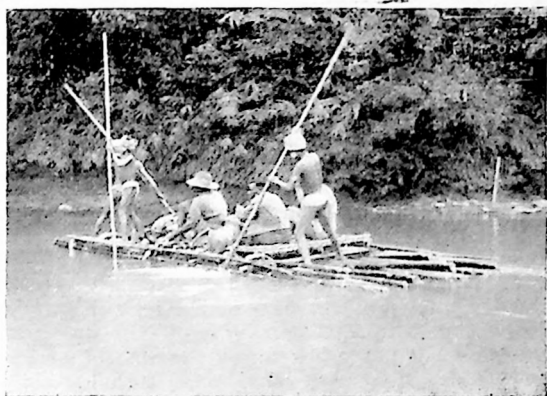
Mobile in Burma Jungle.



Indian Troops' Centre, Cocanada.



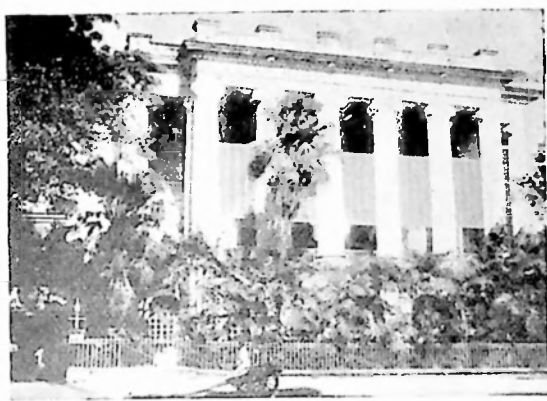
Dropping Toc H Supplies, Burma.



Jungle Transport.



Talbot House, Akyab Island.



Talbot House, Calcutta.



Talbot House, Lahore.



Elephant Point, Burma.

The plan of the India and S.E.A.C. work has been developed with the firm intention that Toc H shall be with the troops from their initial arrival in India in the reception camps, through the jungle warfare training centres to the Operational Divisions, then in the centres where well-earned rest and leave are taken. This chain means that Hostels and Clubs of many different types have to be established, and there are far too few.

The rapid advance through Burma has now meant that Toc H can add to its mobile work and establish static Clubs. The first of these is at Maymyo, the hill station near Mandalay. Here, where a peace-time group of Toc H did its work, was the rare chance of finding existing buildings to be adapted and extended. The staff member who entered with the troops writes, "Maymyo is a delightful spot among wooded hills, not too high, very cool at night. On the following morn we went on a tour of discovery with the object of finding the house which was to be Toc H, Maymyo. We found it nestling among some beautiful trees and on the edge of a large lake, the waters of which were crystal clear. This house is going to be the show place of our efforts on behalf of the British Tommy out East. The aspect is really great."

This House will cement the Toc H contact with the troops in Burma. They will have at least one opportunity for quiet home life, with the very highest standard of comfort and decoration it is possible to achieve, with the Warden ever at hand as host to the guests.

And the future? General Leese's letter shows the desire of the authorities for expansion. This must be achieved, and no limiting factors of staff or finance can be tolerated. The liberation of Burma means that new and even larger campaigns will be launched, and Toc H, now in the forefront, does not intend to lose that position.

Lady Louis Mountbatten, just back from her Red Cross and St. John tour in S.E.A.C., is full of praise for the Toc H Clubs she saw, which included Akyab, some of the Malaria Forward Treatment Units, and two mobile centres working with Operational Divisions. She visited Calcutta, where she discussed with Alan Cowling the great need for extending the work of Toc H in S.E.A.C.

Talbot House, Akyab, deserves a special word. It is the only habitable building on the Island, originally the Imperial Bank. The stone building received a direct hit in the bombing which razed all other buildings to the ground. The top floor was practically demolished; but the ground floor had been filled with earth by the Japs to protect the vaults which they were using as an H.Q., and Toc H, after a tremendous job of clearing earth and cleaning walls, ceiling and floor, moved in. Talbot House, Akyab, opened on the 7th February, is now famous for its homely atmosphere and friendly welcome. Over 8,000 men a day are using the Club, including Americans who come from as far as six miles out. Supplies have to be fetched by plane, and the other day one of the Toc H Staff men in charge flew to Calcutta and back, bringing half-a-ton of supplies which included some thousands of eggs and cakes, gramophone needles, "petromaxes" (petromax lamps) and so on.

Throughout the country schemes are afoot to aid Toc H appeal for £100,000 for work in South East Asia Command. For instance, South Wales has set itself the ambitious target of £50,000 towards the appeal. The city of Cardiff has tackled the business of money-raising with a will, and has exceeded its self-appointed target of £10,000 by £5,000; East Glamorgan has raised £2,000 towards a target of £10,000; Pembroke, Carmarthen and Brecknockshire are confident of £5,000 totals each. Monmouth will raise £10,000, and West Glamorgan £10,000.

FOR NEWCOMERS TO TOC H (by B.B.).

TALBOT HOUSE.—Abbreviated to its initials and pronounced 'Toc H,' Talbot House was founded at Poperinghe in Flanders, where it became famous among all ranks in the last war for its everyday Christianity, its informal hospitality and friendship. Toc H, now world-wide, keeps open house to-day in over 400 Clubs and Hostels on every battle front. Friendship is still first—and then good food, easy chairs, comfortable beds, peace and quietness; these are offered to all Service men and women. Between the two wars Toc H tried to serve its neighbours in a thousand ways, and its war-time Clubs are only one natural expression of its spirit and aims. Its members, who are men and women of all classes and opinions, will continue, when peace comes again, to carry on their work of Christian Fellowship and Service.

Mrs. G. Nicholl,

Toc H, 47, Francis Street,

London, S.W.1.